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ABSTRACT

The Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) was developed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in response to Texas House Bill 72 (1984), which mandated a new basic skills assessment program for mathematics, reading, and writing at grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11. This document is one in a series of Instructional Strategies Guides designed to familiarize Texas educators with the types of strategies employed in assessing learner mastery of TEAMS objectives and to provide suggested instructional activities that can be used to promote mastery of those objectives. This guide focuses on the TEAMS writing objectives for grade 7. It provides a detailed description of the test items used to measure each writing objective. The ten objectives are subsumed under five skill areas: (1) mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling); (2) English usage; (3) sentency formation; (4) proofreading; and (5) organization/appropriate response to purpose and audience (informative/descriptive writing, informative/narrative writing, informative/classificatory writing, and persuasive/descriptive writing). The following information is provided for six of the objectives: (1) a description of the objective; (2) a sample item; (3) test questions; (4) answer choices; (5) answer analysis for the sample item; (6) instructional emphases; and (7) possible instructional activities. (JAZ)

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INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES GUIDE

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WRITING GRADE 7

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TEAMS INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES GUIDE

WRITING

GRADE 7

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* Objectives measured with a written composition will be addressed in a separate publication.

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INTRODUCTION

During 1980-1985 the Texas Education Agency (TEA) administered a criterion-referenced testing program, the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS). That program was designed to measure minimum skills in mathematics, reading, and writing at Grades 3, 5, and 9. In July 1984, under the provisions of House Bill 72, a new basic skills assessment program was mandated in mathematics, reading, and writing at Grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. In response, development of the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) was instituted by TEA during the 1985-1986 school year.

School district personnel from across Texas participated in all aspects of the development of TEAMS. Basic skills objectives were selected after a thorough review of the State Board of Education Rules for Curriculum, GE4 450 01 (Essential Elements). Under TEA supervision measurement specifications and test items were developed for each objective. Statewide field testing was conducted to ensure the quality of test items. The State Board of Education then approved the TEAMS tests for administration.

Because of the significance of the TEAMS program, TEA is providing Texas educators with instructional strategies guides for all objectives measured on each TEAMS examination. These guides describe the TEAMS objectives as well as instructional considerations and activities that can be used to promote mastery of TEAMS objectives.

This instructional strategies guide focuses on the TEAMS writing objectives for Grade 7. It provides a detailed description of the test items used to measure each writing objective. In addition, a brief instructional analysis is provided for each objective as are instructional activities that can help students master the objective.

Texas educators will undoubtedly vary in the ways they wish to promote learner mastery of the TEAMS objectives. Thus, the instructional components of this guide are not intended to be prescriptive. Teachers should view suggested activities as potential approaches that lead to mastery of the TEAMS objectives.

Components of the Instructional Strategies Guide

Ten TEAMS writing objectives are measured at the seventh grade level. These objectives are subsumed under one of five skill areas. The distribution of the writing objectives by skill area is on the next page.

SKILL AREAOBJECTIVEMechanics

Capitalization
Punctuation
Spelling

English Usage

English Usage

Sentence Formation

Sentence Formation

Proofreading

Proofreading

Organization/Appropriate Response to Purpose and Audience

Informative/Descriptive Writing
Informative/Narrative Writing
Informative/Classificatory Writing
Persuasive/Descriptive Writing

This guide provides the following information for each of the writing objectives included in the TEAMS Grade 7 test.

Description of the objective. This section provides a succinct overview of the objective's focus.

Sample item. An illustrative sample item follows the description of each objective. This item is consistent with the test specifications for the objective, hence is representative of the TEAMS items used to measure students' mastery of the objective.

Test questions. To provide a more detailed view of how each TEAMS objective is assessed, the next section provides a description of the test question. For example, Grade 7 spelling and composition items present a stimulus or test question. Test items for other seventh grade writing objectives present directions followed by four answer choices. This component of the guide provides these directions as well as a list of rules eligible for testing.

Answer choices. The next section deals with the response to each multiple-choice test item. For multiple-choice items, important characteristics of the answer choices are described.

Answer analysis for sample item. An analysis of the answer choices from the sample item is then provided for objectives measured by multiple-choice items, that is, all objectives except composition. This analysis explains why the correct answer is right and why the incorrect answers are wrong.

Instructional emphases. Considerations relevant to the design of instructional sequences for each TEAMS objective are described in this section. These instructional analyses are not intended to represent the only important points associated with instruction aimed at a particular objective. However, it is hoped that these discussions will stimulate educators' consideration of each objective.

Possible instructional activities. A final section discusses several instructional activities for each objective that Texas educators may consider as they organize their instructional plans.

Use of the Instructional Strategies Guide

This TEAMS instructional strategies guide is designed to accomplish two goals. First, the guide enables Texas educators to become familiar with the types of strategies employed to assess learner mastery of the TEAMS Grade 7 writing objectives. Educators who wish to learn more about how the TEAMS objectives are tested should consult the TEAMS objectives and measurement specifications available at cost from TEA. The level of detail provided in this instructional strategies guide should provide sufficient information for educators to design effective instructional sequences. Second, each instructional strategies guide provides suggestions for instructional activities that can be used to promote mastery of TEAMS objectives.

The specific setting in which a given district chooses to provide instruction in the TEAMS objectives will influence the way in which the materials in this guide can be employed. The format of the guide permits flexible use.

TEAMS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS OBJECTIVES

WRITING: GRADE SEVEN

Six of the ten TEAMS seventh grade writing objectives are measured by multiple-choice items that generally present four words or groups of words, one of which is written correctly. Each test item contains four answer choices, only one of which will be correct. All possible answer choices will be indicated by the letters A, B, C, and D. The test items represent the types of writing that students might produce in school, at home, or in their community; for example, friendly or business letters as well as narrative, descriptive, or expository essays. The objectives tested in this part of the writing section of the TEAMS seventh grade examination are, according to skill area:

- Mechanics
 - Capitalization
 - Punctuation
 - Spelling
- English Usage
- Sentence Formation
- Proofreading

The remaining four objectives require the student to write a composition. Only one of these objectives will be tested each year. The objectives tested in this part of the writing section of the TEAMS seventh grade examination are:

- Organization/Appropriate Response to Purpose and Audience
 - Informative/Descriptive Writing
 - Informative/Narrative Writing
 - Informative/Classificatory Writing
 - Persuasive/Descriptive Writing

SKILL AREA: MECHANICS

The skill area of mechanics includes three objectives, namely, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. For test items measuring capitalization and punctuation, the student will be presented with four sentences and asked to select the sentence that is written correctly. For test items measuring spelling, the student will be presented with a sentence that is missing a word, then asked to select the correct spelling of the missing word from four possible spellings.

Objective 1: Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

This objective requires students to identify which one of four word groups contains correct capitalization.

Sample Item

Choose the word group that has the correct capitalization.

- A. My favorite teacher is ms. Gustav.
- B. I am in her German class.
- C. My best friend, nate Rosemont, is also in her class.
- D. sincerely, Eunice

Test Questions

1. Four answer choices, as described below, will constitute a test question.
2. Preceding each set of answer choices will be the instruction, "Choose the word group that has the correct capitalization."
3. The correctly capitalized sentence, salutation, or closing will demonstrate the correct use of one or more of the following capitalization rules:
 - a. Capitalize the first word in a sentence.
 - b. Capitalize the pronoun "I."
 - c. Capitalize the names of persons, nationalities, and languages.
 - d. Capitalize the names of days of the week and months of the year.

- e. Capitalize the names of cities, states, and countries.
- f. Capitalize titles that precede a person's name (limited to Dr., Mr., Ms., Miss, and Mrs.).
- g. Capitalize the names of holidays.
- h. Capitalize the salutation and closing of a letter.
- i. Avoid any unnecessary capitalization.

Answer Choices

- 1. A test item will consist of four groups of words, each of which is either a sentence, a salutation, or a closing. Only one answer choice will be correctly capitalized.
- 2. The correct answer choice will demonstrate correct use of one or more of the aforementioned capitalization rules.
- 3. The three answer choices demonstrating incorrect capitalization will consist of one or more violations of the aforementioned capitalization rules. Additionally, an incorrect answer choice may include one or more instances of unnecessary capitalization.

Answer Analysis for Sample Item

- 1. Answer choice A is incorrect because the title "Ms." preceding the name "Gustav" is not capitalized. Titles before a person's name require capitalization. The first word of the sentence, "My," and the name "Gustav" are correctly capitalized.
- 2. Answer choice B is correct. The first word of the sentence, the pronoun "I," is correctly capitalized according to both rules governing its use. The name of the language "German" is also correctly capitalized.
- 3. Answer choice C is incorrect because the name "Nate" is not capitalized. A person's name should always be capitalized. The first word of the sentence, "My," and the surname "Rosemont" are correctly capitalized.
- 4. Answer choice D is incorrect because the word "sincerely," which begins the closing to a friendly letter, is not capitalized. The first word of any closing is always capitalized. The name "Eunice" is correctly capitalized.

Instructional Emphases

Students at this level should be familiar with the use of initial capitalization to begin sentences as well as individuals' names, days, months, and other proper nouns. You may wish to reinforce the distinction between a common noun and a proper noun as the basis of proper standard English capitalization conventions. In general, a proper noun represents a specific, individual entity, while a common noun can refer to any entity within a designated class. The word "dog" is a common noun; "Rover" is a proper noun designating an individual dog (even though there may be more than one dog in the world named Rover). Other such pairs are "day" and "Friday" (or "New Year's Day"), "month" and "January," "country" and "Spain," and "boy" and "Mark."

Capitalization is also an important element in the format of friendly letters. Students should be familiarized with the basic conventions of the proper format to be followed when writing a friendly letter--in particular, with the required capitalization in the letter's date, salutation, and closing. Students will also find that many letters require using a title before a person's name, which also requires capitalization. By writing friendly letters, students will become familiar with these rules. Continued practice and review, as well as ample opportunities for writing and receiving feedback concerning rules that are broken, should adequately reinforce these skills.

Possible Instructional Activities

Common and Proper Paragraphs

Prepare a list of common and proper nouns, none of which have been capitalized. Include in the list an equal number of common nouns and proper nouns. For example:

friday	colorado	boat	halloween
spanish	field	american	sombrero
horse	october	street	apple
joe	rain	book	caroline

Students are to circle or underline the proper nouns and write a brief paragraph that contains these capitalized words. In addition, students are to compose a separate paragraph containing the common nouns from the list. Impose a time limit of five or ten minutes for students to write.

Have individual students read their paragraphs aloud. For instance, call on a student to read the "proper noun" paragraph; other students are to listen for any common nouns from the list that appear in the proper noun paragraph. Have several students read aloud; then write the words, with students providing them, in two columns on the board (one for capitalized, proper nouns and the other for uncapitalized, common nouns). If your students

could benefit from further reinforcement, discuss with them why each word belongs in a particular column.

Diary Letters

One or two days each week, have students write an entry in a "diary." These entries should be kept together and, if you wish, handed in after a designated period of time. When you say something such as, "Take out your diaries and write for five minutes," your students are to write a letter entry to the diary, using friendly letter conventions. The body of the letter should contain at least four sentences and should begin by naming the day of the week. Three or more capitalized words--in addition to the day, the month, the pronouns "I," and the beginning words in sentences--should appear in each entry. An example of such an entry is:

May 28, 1986

Dear Diary,

Today is Wednesday. On Sunday I went to Houston with Alicia and her parents. My French teacher, Mrs. Kelly, told me this morning that I am improving in my work. My father will come back from his business trip in California tonight.

Your friend,

Allison

Following a five- or ten-minute writing period, ask students to name capitalized words that appeared in their entries. List these on the board and, perhaps, discuss why such terms require initial capital letters.

Composition

Encourage your students to incorporate their knowledge of capitalization rules in a brief written composition. Have each student write a one-page composition in class. The title of the composition will be "Me." Provide a list of questions that will generate ideas and to which the answers are likely to contain capitalized words. For example:

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your date of birth? (Spell out the month.)
3. Where were you born?
4. Where do you live? (street, city, state)
5. What are the names of your parents/sisters/brothers?
6. What is your favorite holiday? Why?
7. Where would you like to go for a visit someday? What would you do and see there?

Have students proofread their compositions to make sure they have correctly capitalized appropriate words and avoided any unnecessary capitalization. Collect and correct papers. Gather a list of sentences that contained capitalization problems for students. When you return the papers, go over each of these problem sentences at the board or use an overhead projector.

Have students whose papers contained three or more capitalization errors submit a corrected version of their work.

Objective 2: Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

This objective requires students to identify which one of four sentences contains correct punctuation.

Sample Item

Choose the sentence that has the correct punctuation.

- A. The letter was sent to San Antonio Texas.
- B. Will it arrive by tomorrow.
- C. It left Houston yesterday.
- D. Dad needs more pencils pens, and paper.

Test Questions

- 1. Four answer choices, as described below, will constitute each test question.
- 2. Preceding the four answer choices will be the instructions, "Choose the sentence that has the correct punctuation."
- 3. The correctly punctuated sentence, salutation, or closing will demonstrate the correct usage of one or more of the following punctuation rules:
 - a. Periods are required at the end of declarative and imperative sentences as well as after abbreviated words.
 - b. Question marks are required at the end of interrogative sentences.
 - c. Commas are required between the names of a city and state, immediately following the first item in a series, and following the salutation and closing of a friendly letter. (Students will not be tested on the use of the comma preceding "and" or "or" in a series.)
 - d. Apostrophes are required in contractions and singular possessives.

Answer Choices

- 1. A test item will consist of four groups of words, each of which is either a sentence, a salutation, or a closing. Only one sentence will demonstrate correct punctuation.

2. The correct answer choice will demonstrate correct use of one or more of the aforementioned punctuation rules.
3. Each of the three incorrect answer choices will contain one or more of the following rule violations:
 - a. The omission of punctuation at the end of a sentence.
 - b. The substitution of a period for a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence.
 - c. The omission of a comma between the names of a city and state, between the first two items in a series, or following the salutation or closing of a friendly letter. (Students will not be tested on the use of the comma before "and" or "or" in a series.)
 - d. The omission or misplacement of an apostrophe in contractions or singular possessives.
 - e. The use of unnecessary commas (for example, between the subject and verb of a sentence) and unnecessary apostrophes.

Answer Analysis for Sample Item

1. Answer choice A is incorrect because the comma between "San Antonio" and "Texas" has been omitted. A comma is required between the names of a city and its state. The sentence is correctly terminated with a period.
2. Answer choice B is incorrect because a period has been substituted for a question mark at the end of the sentence. This is an interrogative sentence and requires a question mark as its ending punctuation.
3. Answer choice C is the correct answer. The sentence is declarative and is correctly terminated with a period.
4. Answer choice D is incorrect because a comma has been omitted between "pencils" and "pens," the first two items in a series. A comma is always required between the first two items of a series. The optional comma preceding the word "and" has been included, but it is not eligible for testing. The sentence is correctly terminated with a period.

Instructional Emphases

Students who have trouble grasping the usage rules of certain punctuation marks are, in many cases, demonstrating an inability to "hear" the thought or idea they wish to express on paper. Thus, it is important that students become familiar with the relationship between punctuation marks and oral inflection and phrasing. For example, a question mark represents the need

to raise voice intonation at the end of an interrogative sentence, and a comma often represents the need for a brief pause such as that heard between the first two items in a series. If we are unsure about whether to use a certain punctuation mark at a given place in a written composition, it sometimes helps to say the sentence aloud, or "hear" the sentence in our mind as we silently "say" the sentence. This practice may help your students to acquire a sense of what punctuation marks do.

Sometimes, however, a particular use of a punctuation mark is based on convention rather than on inflection or phrasing. In this regard, the practice of writing friendly letters should prove helpful in familiarizing students with many of these standard punctuation rules. Students will see that commas are required in a letter's date, salutation, and closing. In this context, punctuation conventions serve to guide the reader through the different components of a letter.

At the seventh grade level, four fundamental punctuation marks are tested: periods, question marks, commas, and apostrophes. The particular uses that are eligible for testing are essential in the writing of any letter or composition. For example, only four uses of that complex and problematic punctuation mark, the comma, are eligible for testing on the TEAMS seventh grade examination. Refer to these rules as well as to the eligible uses of periods, question marks, and apostrophes. Your students should become familiar with these applications of commonly used punctuation marks. Such techniques as letter-writing and other practice methods that, for you, have proven effective in familiarizing students with standard punctuation usage should be helpful in promoting learner mastery of this objective.

Possible Instructional Activities

Punctuation Pals

Students can employ their knowledge of punctuation usage to clarify their classmates' messages. Have each student write a brief paragraph from which all punctuation has been deleted. Have pairs of students exchange papers and punctuate each other's paragraphs. Discuss problematic punctuation uses when students have completed their work.

Alternatively, you can create paragraphs without punctuation and distribute copies to students. Be sure to use sentences that call for the types of punctuation described on page 10.

Action Apostrophes

Students can incorporate the correct uses of apostrophes into various sentence structures. Write on the board a list of

two-word phrases such as the following:

we will	it is	they will
they are	can not	we are
I am	do not	have not
she is	would not	could not

Have your students write a sentence for each, using a contraction in place of each word pair. (For example: "We're leaving tomorrow.") Make sure that students use proper punctuation in all parts of their sentences.

The Comma Shuffle

Compose several sentences containing series of items that shift in meaning according to comma placement. Write one such sentence, without commas, on the chalkboard. For example:

We had chicken fried steak cheese grits cream gravy
ice cream pie and milk.

Have students copy and punctuate the sentence. Call on a student to read the sentence aloud and insert commas at the board. (If possible, present pictures of the foods that were available in this student's version of the meal.) Call on another student, one who has arranged the commas differently, to read the sentence aloud and replace the commas on the board as they appear in this second version. (Again, a graphic representation of the meal would be effective.) Use additional examples to reinforce how commas in a series can sometimes be used to alter meaning. In addition, you may wish to present a sentence or two containing a fixed series, one in which shifting commas is not possible.

Ten Punctuation Situations

Distribute copies of a list of sentences (to serve as an instructional activity, a review exercise, or a quiz). In each sentence, students are to fill in a missing punctuation mark that has been replaced by a blank. Students are also to identify which of 10 "punctuation situations" is represented by the missing punctuation mark and then, in parentheses, spell out the name of the punctuation mark. The following is a sample worksheet consisting of a sentence for each of the 10 punctuation situations that are eligible for testing on the seventh grade TEAMS examination.

1. Are we leaving soon? question (question mark)
2. Don't eat that candy bar. contraction (apostrophe)
3. We ate salad, chili, and corn. series (comma)
4. Mr. James is our teacher. abbreviation (period)

5. Today is October 5, 1986. date (comma)
6. My name is Benjamin. statement (period)
7. Dear Suzanne, friendly salutation (comma)
8. I borrowed Jamie's pen. singular possessive (apostrophe)
9. We are in Austin, Texas. city and state (comma)
10. Sincerely yours, closing (comma)

Comic Insertions

Reproduce a page of comic strips that contains several eligible uses of punctuation marks. Delete these punctuation marks before reproducing copies for students. (You may wish to leave in marks and conventions that are not tested at this level, such as exclamation marks and the use of a comma before "and" in a series.) Have students work independently to insert punctuation marks. Then assign students to read aloud individual characters' lines--or, to give more students an opportunity to read, call on a different student to read each panel. Students are to read the lines with the names of punctuation marks; for example, "Hughie apostrophe s mother bought us balloons comma popcorn comma and lemonade for our party period." Encourage students to read expressively, as though the extra words were not there. Discuss punctuation problems as they arise or at predetermined intervals (such as after each row of comic strip panels).

Objective 3: Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

This objective requires students to recognize, from four possible spellings, the correct spelling of a word that is missing from a sentence.

Sample Item

Choose the correct spelling of the word that goes in the blank.

The accused are _____ until they are proven guilty.

- A. innocent
- B. inocent
- C. innosent
- D. innocint

Test Questions

1. A test item will consist of a sentence with a missing word. The correctly spelled version of the word is to be selected from among four possible choices.
2. The sentence will be preceded by the instruction, "Choose the correct spelling of the word that goes in the blank."
3. Neither contractions nor homonyms will be eligible for testing.

Answer Choices

1. Three incorrectly spelled versions of the missing word will be presented as well as the correctly spelled version of the missing word.
2. Among the incorrect versions, the most common misspellings of the word that is tested shall be presented.

Answer Analysis for Sample Item

1. Answer choice A is correct. This is the correct spelling of the word innocent.
2. Answer choice B is incorrect because the second n has been omitted from the correct double consonant construction.
3. Answer choice C is incorrect because an s has been substituted for the soft c between the o and the e.

4. Answer choice D is incorrect because an i has been substituted for the short e vowel sound between c and n.

Instructional Emphases

An ability to spell depends on many factors, including a knowledge of sound-letter correspondences and the successful memorization of sight words in which these sound-letter correspondences are unabashedly violated. Spelling is not an easy skill to master in English, a language whose origins are rich and diverse. You can, however, enhance your students' spelling abilities by providing ample opportunities for writing and for the clarification of spelling difficulties. Frequent exposure to problematic spelling words will increase students' familiarity with these words until the words' correct spellings are firmly imprinted in your students' minds.

Encourage students to use dictionaries to check spellings about which they are unsure. Have students keep track of problematic spelling words in a special section of their notebooks. Place around the room large flashcards displaying words that are often misspelled by your students. These and other approaches can help your students to become better spellers.

Possible Instructional Activities

Fill and Spell

Produce a set of word cards, each card containing a word that is familiar to seventh grade students. Include words that are commonly misspelled, such as "separate," "success," "answer," "exercise," and "remember." Designate each column of students as a team (or otherwise create four or five teams). Give a card to the first student in the first column. This student is to turn to the student behind him or her and say an open-ended sentence that should end with the word on the card. For example, a sentence for the word "answer" might be, "The teacher asked a question and called on Rick, but Rick didn't know the ____." (To encourage a reasonable amount of restraint, it may be a good idea to establish a word limit on these sentences--25 or 30 words, for instance.)

The responding student is to "fill in the blank" with a single word and then spell the word. If the word is not the one on the card or is spelled incorrectly (do not specify which has occurred), the student who provided the sentence passes the card to the first student on the next team, who provides a new sentence for the second member on that team. Play continues from team to team until the word is spelled correctly, at which time the team scores a point. The successful player is given a new card, and so on. Each time a team takes a turn, continue with the member following the player who last participated. Continue

until one team reaches a certain number of points and the other teams have been allowed to take an equal number of turns.

Dictionary Search

General spelling abilities can be improved by enhancing student competence in dictionary use. Provide each student with a dictionary, which will be used to search for the correct spellings of difficult words. Say a word that is probably familiar to students, but which is likely to be difficult for them to spell--for example, "eclipse," "occasion," or "statistics." Ask them to search their dictionaries for the word and to raise their hands when they think they have found it. The student who finds the word is to say it, spell it, provide a definition, and use the word in a sentence. Then discuss strategies used for locating that particular word in the dictionary (individual sound-letter correspondences, similarity to other words). Continue with a few other words.

Correct Completions

Teachers can emphasize sight recognition skills by providing students with an opportunity to correct common misspellings. Write a group of misspelled words on the board. You may want to label this list "misspelled words" or "common misspellings" so that students do not mistake these misspellings for correct spellings.

Have each student write three or four simple sentences, each of which could logically contain one of the misspelled words that appear on the board. Instead of writing the word, however, instruct your students to leave a blank. Have students trade papers, then fill in the blanks with the correct spellings of appropriate words from the misspelled list. When students have finished, call on individual students to give correct spellings. Write these on the board. Students can check their work with the corrected spellings.

Spelling Bee

The traditional spelling bee, or any variation, may prove useful in familiarizing students with the correct spellings of words. A variation can be employed that avoids eliminating students from the exercise. Prepare two separate lists of spelling words. Divide your students into two teams and give each team a list. Each team will use its own list of words to test the other team.

Flip a coin to determine which team starts. A student from Team One chooses a classmate from Team Two and gives that student a word from Team One's spelling list. Only the student who has been called upon can attempt to spell the word aloud. If the

student from Team Two incorrectly spells the word, Team One receives a point and another student from Team Two must try to spell the word correctly. If the word is spelled correctly by a Team Two student, Team Two receives a point. Then that Team Two student chooses a Team One student and gives that person a word from the Team Two list. Any word misspelled by a team three times is put on the board, and a student from the team who lost the three points chooses another spelling word from their list for a student on the other team. Moderate the contest to make sure all students participate equally. The team with the most points wins.

Spelling Strategies

Prepare a list of five words that are probably unfamiliar to your students. For example:

1. fandango
2. spectrograph
3. pagination
4. unguent
5. anthurium

Read each word aloud and have students try to spell it. Assure students that they are not expected to know the correct spellings of the words; that everyone is engaged in a guessing game.

After you have read all five words, call three or four students, with their papers, to the board. Reread the first word and ask these students to write it on the chalkboard. Examine the three or four spelling possibilities with the class, discussing the strategies used by each speller. The following spelling strategies may arise:

- building from familiar prefixes, suffixes, and root words
- employing known sound-letter correspondences
- comparing parts of a word to same- or similar-sounding parts of familiar words.

Provide the correct spelling of the word and its meaning, and discuss whether and, if so, how the meaning is conveyed by the word's parts. Continue with the remaining words.

Alternatively, you may use nonsense words in this activity. In this variation, students hear a word and decide upon a spelling and, if you wish, a meaning for the word.

SKILL AREA: ENGLISH USAGE

Objective 4: Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

This objective requires students to identify which one of four sentences employs correct English usage.

Sample Item

Choose the sentence that is written correctly.

- A. Me and Danny like to fly our kites in the park.
- B. We flown them there many times.
- C. We play together, and we eat our lunch.
- D. His dog run with us.

Test Questions

1. Four answer choices, as described below, will constitute each test question.
2. Preceding the four answer choices will be the instruction, "Choose the sentence that is written correctly."
3. The following usage rules are eligible for testing:
 - a. Subject-Verb Agreement: A verb must agree in number and in person with its subject. (Constructions in which a comma would create an imperative form--"Sandra eat the toast," for example--will not be tested.)
 - b. Verb Conjugation: A verb must be conjugated correctly.
 - c. Verb Tense: A verb must agree in tense with the time sense of a sentence.
 - d. Comparative and Superlative Forms: A comparative or superlative adjective must be formed correctly.
 - e. Word Choice: The appropriate word must be selected for use in a sentence.
 - f. Negative Constructions: A negative construction must be formed correctly.
 - g. Nominative Forms of Pronouns: A pronoun acting as a subject must be in its nominative case form.

Answer Choices

1. A test item will consist of four versions of a sentence. Only one version will demonstrate correct English usage.
2. No version will contain words or phrases placed between a subject and its verb.
3. The verb conjugations that are used will be in the past, present, present perfect, or future tense ("went," "go," "have gone," "will go") or in the continuous past or present tense ("was dancing," "is dancing").
4. The correct answer will illustrate one or more of the following:
 - a. correct subject-verb agreement
 - b. the correct verb form (conjugation and tense)
 - c. the correct nominative form of a pronoun as a subject
 - d. the correct comparative or superlative form of an adjective
 - e. correct word choice
 - f. avoidance of double negatives (The use of "scarcely" and "hardly" will not be tested.)
5. Each incorrect answer will contain one error representing one or more of the following English usage violations:
 - a. lack of subject-verb agreement
 - (1) number (example of error: "They is cooking dinner in the kitchen.")
 - (2) person (example of error: "I walks to school with my friend Aldo.")
 - b. incorrect verb conjugation
 - (1) an irregular verb conjugated as if it were regular (example of error: "The play beganened at 7:00.")
 - (2) the past participle used as a past tense in place of a compound verb (example of error: "I been to Sally's house twice.")
 - c. incorrect verb tense--a verb contradicting the time sense of the sentence (example of error: "My uncle buys a new car last week.")

- d. incorrect nominative forms of pronouns as subject
(example of error: "Me and Connie are best friends.")
- e. incorrect comparative or superlative forms of adjectives
 - (1) a double comparison or superlative (example of error: "Tenesha is the most best singer in the chorus.")
 - (2) a nonexistent "-er" or "-est" form (example of error: "Whitney is the intelligentest person I know.")
- f. incorrect word choice (example of error: "Let's go over at Marcela's house.")
- g. use of a double negative (example of error: "Teddy doesn't want no spinach.")

Answer Analysis for Sample Item

- 1. Answer choice A is incorrect. The subject pronoun, which should be in the nominative case ("I"), is in the objective case ("Me").
- 2. Answer choice B is incorrect. The past tense form of the irregular verb "fly" is "flew," not "flown." The past participle of the verb has been incorrectly used without the necessary auxiliary verb, "have."
- 3. Answer choice C is correct. Both clauses of this compound sentence demonstrate proper subject-verb agreement and correct verb conjugations.
- 4. Answer choice D is incorrect. The verb disagrees with its subject.

Instructional Emphases

Seventh graders need to develop the facility to recognize nonstandard forms and replace them with standard American English equivalents. As students are required to produce increasing amounts of writing, it may occasionally become necessary to reiterate and reinforce the concept of standard versus nonstandard forms. Pointing out nonstandard forms as they emerge, in spoken or written form, can be a productive learning experience if done in a noncritical manner. Indicate the standard equivalents. You may wish to have your students record these forms in a section of their notebook designated for that purpose. This will help students to develop the facility to recognize nonstandard forms.

When students write essays, stories, or reports, you may want to review the three steps of the writing process: prewriting (taking notes, jotting down ideas); writing (writing ideas in an organized rough draft); and editing or proofreading (screening for errors and producing a finished written work). Consciously looking for usage errors as well as errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling need not come until the final step in the writing process.

Developing an awareness of standard forms will prepare students to respond correctly on TEAMS English usage items. Furthermore, it will improve the writing skills necessary for success as students continue their education.

Possible Instructional Activities

TV Talk

This activity is designed to develop in students an awareness of standard and nonstandard English forms. It should follow some discussion on this topic. You may wish to discuss "Texisms," expressions that speakers use as a part of Texas culture and conversation (for example, "You done good."), but which are not appropriate standard American English forms and, therefore, should not be employed in writing. Ask students to pay attention to how characters on their favorite television programs speak. Have students write down at least five phrases or sentences, uttered by television characters, that contain nonstandard forms. Then require students to write equivalent standard English forms.

You may wish, in addition, to have students note the names of the characters who spoke in these nonstandard forms. In a class discussion, students can talk about why a character speaks in a certain dialect or uses particular nonstandard forms. You might want to add that these characters, like many students, have had to learn how to "switch codes," to read and write standard English in various situations. Describe situations (such as reading a newspaper, magazine, or book; speaking with someone from another part of the country) that a character would encounter which would require a "switch" to standard English forms.

Super Students

This activity provides practice with superlative forms of adjectives. Create a cast of five (or so) imaginary student characters. You may either produce simple drawings of these students or write brief descriptions of them. Give names to the student characters and make them different from one another. They should embody various attributes, such as "athletic," "smart," "handsome," "pretty," "thin," "tall," "short," and "happy." List these adjectives below the group of drawings or descriptions. Students are to select the imaginary student who

best fits each adjective and to express an opinion about that imaginary student in a sentence containing a superlative ("Francine is the prettiest. John is the tallest. Diana is the most athletic."). Encourage students to add their own adjectives and to create sentences containing the superlative forms of those adjectives.

Comparative forms may also be practiced with these drawings or descriptions. In this variation, students write sentences in which they compare pairs of students ("John is taller than Diana." or "Diana is more athletic than Francine.").

Other activities that provide practice in the formation of comparatives and superlatives are:

- Having students write captions for pictures clipped from magazines (for example, "This is the most beautiful woman in the world." "Dan's car is the fastest, the prettiest, the cleanest, and the shiniest." "This is the coziest cottage in the village." "The mailman is faster than the dog." "The man on the right looks more intelligent than the man on the left.").
- Having students create TV commercials in which an abundance of superlatives and/or comparatives is used.

Double Negativity

Listen to your students speak, paying special attention to double negative forms. Write down sentences you hear that contain these forms. When you have gathered a list of five or ten sentences containing double negatives, introduce the topic by presenting the fact that sometimes the way we say things is not the same as the way we should write them. (It might be helpful to give an example from your own speech of an expression that you would write differently.) Explain that double negatives are one common example of a nonstandard speech form that is not acceptable in "proper" speaking or writing.

Write on the board one of the sentences that you have gathered, for example:

I don't have no pencil.

Say something such as, "I heard someone say this the other day. We know what the person meant, but this is not a standard, acceptable form. Can anyone tell me what is wrong with this sentence?" Obtain or provide the explanation that the sentence contains a double negative. Explain that a double negative means that the sentence is made negative twice: with "not" (contained in the contraction "don't") and then again with "no." The second negative, in essence, cancels out the first negative. Ask for a

student volunteer to explain how the sentence can be changed to a standard form such as:

I don't have a pencil.

or

I have no pencil.

Provide other examples of double negatives, one at a time. You may wish to have your students copy down each sentence with its corrected form(s). As each example is presented, identify generalizations that apply.

We haven't never been to Austin.

Corrected forms:

We have never been to Austin.

We haven't ever been to Austin.

In an example such as the following, you will first need to correct, with your students, errors in subject-verb agreement.

doesn't any
He don't have no friends.

Verbal Irregularities

Provide a list of verbs with irregular forms, such as:

be	bring	come
have	drink	write
go	ride	begin
do	take	eat

Have each student write 10 sentences in each of which a form of one (or more) of the listed verbs has been replaced by a blank. Each verb should be represented at least once. The verb should appear in parentheses after the sentence.

Last night we _____ spaghetti. (eat)
I can't talk now because I haven't _____ my homework. (do)
The play _____ an hour ago. (begin)

Each student is to exchange papers with another student and fill in the blanks to complete that student's sentences.

SKILL AREA: SENTENCE FORMATION

Objective 5: Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments and/or run-ons.

This objective requires students to identify which one of four groups of words forms a complete sentence.

Sample Item

Choose the group of words that is a complete sentence (not a sentence fragment or a run-on).

- A. I like to read short stories.
- B. In the evening before bedtime.
- C. I read one each night, my dreams are colorful and fun.
- D. Science fiction and fantasy.

Test Questions

- 1. Four groups of words, as described below, will be presented.
- 2. Preceding each set of four groups of words will be the instruction, "Choose the group of words that is a complete sentence (not a sentence fragment or a run-on)."

Answer Choices

- 1. Each group of words will begin with a capital letter and end with a period. One group will be a complete simple, compound, or complex sentence. Each of the other three groups will be either a sentence fragment or a run-on as described below.
- 2. The correct answer will be the complete sentence. This sentence will follow normal sentence order (for example, subject-verb-complement or subject-verb-modifier).
- 3. A fragment will consist of a brief phrase or word group. A run-on will consist of two independent clauses written as a single sentence. Each incorrect answer will exemplify one of the following:
 - a. a word group with a subject but no predicate (example of error: "My friend Carl.")

- b. a word group with a predicate but no subject (example of error: "Takes his dog for a walk every morning.") (NOTE: Groups of words that could be imperative forms--"Run fast." "Make your bed."--will not be tested.)
- c. one or more prepositional phrases (example of error: "At my grandparents' house on Sunday afternoons.")
- d. one or more participial phrases (examples of error: "Playing dominoes and drinking lemonade." "Eaten by moths.")
- e. two independent clauses with no period between them (example of error: "She sat down she wrote a long letter to her friend.")
- f. two independent clauses with a comma between them (example of error: "We ate lunch at the park, it was very pleasant.")

Answer Analysis for Sample Item

- 1. Answer A is correct. This is a complete sentence, containing both subject and predicate.
- 2. Answer B is incorrect. It is a sentence fragment consisting of two prepositional phrases.
- 3. Answer C is incorrect. Two independent clauses connected by a comma form a run-on.
- 4. Answer D is incorrect. A subject with no predicate is a sentence fragment.

Instructional Emphases

A complete sentence forms a complete thought. All of the incomplete sentences below express incomplete thoughts. They leave questions in the reader's mind.

Runs like a deer.	(Who does?)
My cousin Jonathan.	(What about him?)
Under the bridge.	(What's happening there?)
Playing the piano.	(Who is?) or (What about it?)

These groups of words are fragments of sentences. Webster defines a fragment as "a part broken off, detached, or incomplete." This definition may help your students to conceptualize what constitutes a sentence fragment: it is a detached and incomplete part of a sentence.

Students taking the TEAMS examination must also be able to recognize run-ons as distinct from complete sentences. A run-on

is simply two complete sentences that have been run together without being properly connected. A complete sentence--that is, a group of words containing both a subject and a predicate--becomes an independent clause when it is joined to another complete sentence with a coordinating conjunction such as "and," "but," or "or." A comma should precede such a conjunction when the conjunction is followed by an independent clause.

They took the train to Beaumont.
Their relatives met them at the station.
(two complete sentences)

They took the train to Beaumont, and
their relatives met them at the station.
(two independent clauses joined by a coordinating
conjunction)

A run-on occurs when the coordinating conjunction does not appear:

They took the train to Beaumont their relatives met
them at the station.
(a run-on)

They took the train to Beaumont, their relatives met
them at the station.
(a run-on)

By reviewing and periodically reinforcing these fundamental sentence formation concepts--and by indicating to individual students their own sentence construction errors--you can help your students to write complete sentences and to approach with confidence the sentence formation objective of the TEAMS examination.

Possible Instructional Activities

Questioning Fragments

Produce a list of 10 or 20 sentence fragments. Review with students the definition of a sentence fragment as explained in "Instructional Emphases" above. For each fragment, students are to (1) pose a question that needs answering in order for the group of words to express a complete thought, and (2) form a complete sentence, containing the fragment, in which the question is answered.

FRAGMENT: Bought some new shoes.
(QUESTION: Who did?)
COMPLETE SENTENCE: Bertha bought some new shoes.

FRAGMENT: At the end of Hilltop Lane.
(QUESTION: What's happening there?)
COMPLETE SENTENCE: At the end of Hilltop Lane there is a
 wishing well.

FRAGMENT: My best friend Claude.
(QUESTION: What about him?)
COMPLETE SENTENCE: My best friend Claude has a pet rooster.

A Trio of Fragments

On index cards, write (1) subjects, (2) verbs or verb phrases, and (3) prepositional phrases. For example, one index card might say "Fingerprints." Another card might say "have been found," and a third "on the doorknob." Give each student a card. Allow students to circulate in the classroom looking for other students with whom they can form a three-part sentence.

As sentence trio members find one another, ask them to write their sentences on the chalkboard. (If there are thirty students in your class, there will be 10 sentences on the board.) Discuss the contributing parts of the complete sentences (subjects, verbs, prepositional phrases) and reinforce the fact that none of these three parts can stand alone as a sentence. You may also wish to emphasize that a subject and a verb can form a sentence without a prepositional phrase, which provides additional information about the subject and/or the verb of the sentence.

On and On

Discuss ways of fixing run-ons so that they are complete, correctly formed sentences. Create paragraphs containing run-ons. Have students underline run-ons, then rewrite the paragraphs using proper sentence formation. You may wish to have one-third of the class rewrite each run-on as two separate sentences, one-third rewrite each run-on as a properly connected pair of independent clauses in a compound sentence, and the remaining one-third rewrite some run-ons as pairs of sentences and others as correctly formed compound sentences. Have a representative student from each group read each paragraph or write it on the board.

Draft Helpers

Collect rough drafts, without names, of a writing assignment. Review with your students what constitutes a sentence fragment and what constitutes a run-on. Pass out drafts to "helpers," that is, other students in the class. Each "helper" is to underline fragments and run-ons on each draft. Some students will need more guidance than others; you may wish to enlist the aid of one or two students who are proficient writers (of complete sentences) to circulate and assist other "helpers."

Collect drafts and check the accuracy of helpers' assessments before returning drafts to students for rewriting. (You can either have students retrieve their own papers from a pile or, if you are familiar with individual students' handwriting, hand the drafts back yourself.)

SKILL: PROOFREADING

Objective 6: Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written communication.

This objective requires students to identify whether there is an error in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, or English usage within a specified part of a communication.

Sample Items

Read each line of the passage. On EACH line, look for a mistake in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or in the way a word is used. If you find a mistake in an underlined part, mark the letter of that part on your answer folder. If you don't find a mistake on a line, mark answer choice D or H.

Ms. Plume is my French teacher. She were born No Mistake
A B C D

in New Orleans, Louisiana. Most of the student's think No Mistake
E F G H

she's unfriendly, but this reputation is unfair. No Mistake
A B C D

She is patient and helpful when I ask questions. No Mistakes
E F G H

Test Questions

1. Four lines of text comprising a story or description will be presented. Each line of text will be a test item containing four answer choices, as described below.
2. Preceding each group of four lines of text will be the following instructions. "Read each line of the passage. On EACH line, look for a mistake in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or in the way a word is used. If you find a mistake in an underlined part, mark the letter of that part on your answer folder. If you don't find a mistake on a line, mark answer choice D or H."

Answer Choices

1. All lines of text, each of which constitutes a test item, will contain three parts that are underlined. An underlined part will include one or more words and/or numbers. Beneath these three underlined parts will appear the letters A, B, and C or E, F, and G, respectively. One of these three underlined parts may contain an error in spelling, punctua-

tion, capitalization, or usage. At the end of each line of text will appear the underlined phrase "No Mistake," beneath which will appear the letter D or H.

2. If an error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or usage appears in the line of text, the correct answer will be the letter corresponding to the underlined part that contains the error. Only the errors defined as eligible in each individual skill area (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage) will be eligible for testing in the proofreading section.

If no error exists in the line of text, the correct answer will be D or H, the "No Mistake" response.

3. If a line of text contains an error, the three incorrect answer choices will be the two underlined parts that are written correctly and D or H, the "No Mistake" response (which incorrectly states that there are no errors in the line of text).

If the line of text is written correctly, with no errors, the three underlined parts of the text labeled A, B, and C or E, F, and G are all incorrect answer choices.

4. No line of text will exceed 15 words in length.
5. An underlined part may extend beyond a word to indicate that the punctuation mark or lack of punctuation will be considered. An underlined part at the end of a sentence will extend beyond the final word to include the period or lack of a period. Whenever a date is tested, the entire date will be underlined. Whenever a city and state are tested together, the entire group of words will be underlined. Whenever a person's title and name are tested, the title and name will be underlined together.

Answer Analysis for Sample Items

NOTE: In the proofreading objective, each one of the four lines of text comprising a unified description or story constitutes a test item. Each line, therefore, contains a correct answer choice and three incorrect answer choices.

1. The first line of text contains a usage error in the underlined part labeled "C." The verb phrase "were born" disagrees in number with its subject, "she." The correct answer is, therefore, C. Answers A and B are incorrect answer choices because they are written correctly. Answer D, "No Mistake," is also an incorrect answer choice. It erroneously states that no error exists in the preceding line of text.

2. The correct answer for the second line of text is F. This underlined part contains a punctuation error: "students" is a plural subject form and should not contain an apostrophe as it does here. Answers E and G are incorrect answer choices because they contain no errors. Answer H is incorrect because the line of text does contain a mistake.
3. The third line of text contains a spelling error: "unfriendly" is misspelled as "unfrendly." The letter corresponding to this error is B, which is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Answers A and C are incorrect because these parts are written correctly. Answer D is incorrect because the text does, in fact, contain an error.
4. No error exists in the fourth line of text. Therefore, the correct answer choice is H, "No Mistake." Answers E, F, and G are incorrect answer choices because they are free of errors.

Instructional Emphases

Students entering the secondary level of their education are required to produce more written work than during previous grades. It is, therefore, essential for seventh graders to acquire the habit of proofreading their work before considering it to be "final" and ready to hand in. With practice and reinforcement of rules and conventions of standard American English, students can develop a capacity to recognize errors as they appear in writing samples. The proofreading objective on the TEAMS examination focuses on this important skill.

Every student should be encouraged to work continually on building a "screen" in each writing skill area: a "spelling screen," a "capitalization screen," a "punctuation screen," and an "English usage screen." Each of these screens consists of a set of rules and conventions in the particular skill area. These rules allow the writer to read a piece of writing with an eye to locating mistakes that need to be corrected. Remind students that they need not use these screens until they have put their ideas on paper and are ready to edit, or proofread, their work. Then they can produce a final copy that is ready to submit.

You may wish to hold editing sessions during class time so that you can be available to answer questions that students may have concerning possible errors in the rough drafts of their written work. Students may use this time to produce final drafts of their work. By periodically presenting common mistakes that arise, you can provide variety to break up the work period and review of important points in writing mechanics and word usage.

Possible Instructional Activities

Editing Session

Adapt five paragraphs from newspaper or magazine articles so that each paragraph contains 10 errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and English usage. (If you wish to include only errors that may appear on the TEAMS examination, refer to eligible errors as listed in this instructional guide.) Distribute copies of these paragraphs to students. Each student should have a different paragraph than the students in the surrounding area. Each paragraph should have an identifying letter or number (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 or Paragraphs A, B, C, D, and E). In the upper right-hand corner of each paper should appear the following:

Editor #1 _____
Editor #2 _____
Editor #3 _____

You may wish to introduce the basic symbols that are used by editors. Alternatively, you can have students circle and number errors. Then, at the bottom of the page, students can identify the errors that they have detected and suggest corrections.

The first editor--the person who first receives the paragraph--is to write his or her initials in the space after "Editor #1" and then locate errors. Every identified error should be accompanied by the number of the editor who first found it. After five minutes or so, have students pass their paragraphs to other students (for example, to the students behind them or, for students in the back row, to the students in the front row). These students are to write their initials after "Editor #2," then locate any errors that were not detected by the first editors. After another five minutes, papers move on to third editors. These students place their initials after "Editor 3" and attempt to find further errors. If the 10 errors have been identified anywhere along the way, the next editor is to check the errors identified by the previous editor(s) to ascertain that the errors are valid.

Using an overhead projector, project an unedited copy of each paragraph. Begin with Paragraph #1 (or Paragraph A). Ask a third editor who has a copy of this paragraph to list orally the 10 errors as you indicate them on the projected paragraph. If the 10 errors are not identified, ask for volunteers to point out the remaining errors.

Proof It

You can provide practice in identifying errors in a format similar to that encountered on the TEAMS examination. In this way, you can ensure that students will feel comfortable and relatively confident when they approach actual TEAMS items. As

often as you feel it is useful, provide three to five groups of four practice items. (See the sample items and test question and answer choice descriptions on pp. 30-32.) You can create your own short paragraphs or extract sections containing errors from students' work.

Allow students sufficient time to solve the practice items independently, then discuss each item. Encourage students to volunteer answers and to ask questions.

It might be helpful to students if you (or they) keep track of how many items they solve correctly during each practice session. In this way, students can see their own recorded progress and you can be appraised of how well prepared they are for this section of the TEAMS examination.

It is important to reinforce continually the notion that proofreading is a skill that students, as writers, need to apply habitually to their own written work.